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ABSTRACT

Decalogue in Greek means ten words. Some scholars think that the Decalogue began as a list of very short moral sayings that existed long before the Bible time of Moses. This lesson presents two understandings of the Decalogue. A biblical view is followed by a scholarly view. Students read through Decalogue versions that are found in Exodus chapters 20 and 34, Leviticus chapter 19, and Deuteronomy chapter 5. They trace these commandment ideas as they are found in the New Testament. This study sets the stage for discussions about whether highly edited lists of the Ten Commandments should be endorsed by local, state, or national governments, including postings in public schools. The study consists of a student text that can be easily duplicated, a footnoted teachers edition of the text, a source analysis section, an activities for teachers and students sheet, an appendix on "The Religion of Zoroaster," and a 17-item bibliography. (BT)

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The

Decalogue

Bible Scholarship for Use Today

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THE TEACHERS' PRESS

Brant Abrahamson

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Preface

The Decalogue: Bible Scholarship for Use Today consists of an eight-page lesson focused on historical study of a Bible theme that's linked to a current "hot topic."

First we present two understandings of the Decalogue. A "Biblical View" is followed by "A Scholarly View." According to Biblical researchers such as Richard Friedman, the first five books of the Bible--the Torah or Pentateuch--have four principal authors. Scholars have long referred to them by the letters "E," "J," "P" and "D." Each of these Biblical authors has a version of the Decalogue commandments in his writing.

Next, students read through these Decalogue versions that are found in Exodus chapter 20, Exodus chapter 34, Leviticus chapter 19 and Deuteronomy chapter 5. Then, they trace these commandment ideas as they are found in the New Testament of the Christian Bible. This study sets the stage for discussions about whether highly edited lists of the Ten Commandments should be endorsed by local, state or national governments, including postings in public schools.

They look at reasons why people in various groups might want governmental recognition of the Decalogue as well and the multiple legal and other problems that such attempts call to mind. In sum, we hope the lesson encourages students to expand their understanding of the Bible--one of the formative elements of Western culture--at the same time they are thinking through an important current issue.

Decalogue: Bible Scholarship for Use Today consists of a "Student Text" (8 pages) that can be easily removed for duplication. Since instructors want to know much more than is in their students' text, we've included a footnoted "Teachers Edition" of the text (10 pages), a 5-page "Source Analysis" section, an "Activities for Teachers and Students" sheet, an Appendix on "The Religion of Zoroaster" and a Bibliography.

In regard to evaluation, we believe that essays best enable students to display their "considered thought." When writing on issues such as the Ten Commandments, we suggest their efforts be evaluated by how successfully they can present their viewpoints--whatever they are--without using common fallacies. *Thinking Logically: A Study of Common Fallacies* (The Teachers' Press) is an introductory unit that helps students achieve this goal.

Brant Abrahamson, February, 2000

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The Decalogue: Its History and Use

Introduction.

Our era is a time of great cultural, technological and economic change, and many people think they see increased anti-social behavior and mistreatment of others. They also believe that there has been an upswing of selfish and rude behavior, immorality, and unethical acts. Their efforts to deal with these situations have resulted in social and political conflicts. One dispute in America revolves around the Biblical Decalogue--the Ten Commandments.

There are Christian groups that want this ancient set of rules to be officially displayed. They suggest that it be placed on the walls of governmental buildings, in schools and generally be the focus of a renewed morality. Is this a good idea for our secular and multi-religious--but dominantly Christian--American society? Would various public displays of the Decalogue help us through this time of social transformation? We'll study the history of the Decalogue to help us think through answers to these questions.

The History.

Any discussion of the history of the Decalogue is likely to be controversial because it comes out of the Bible, a book many--not all--Americans believe contains divine messages. Secular Americans or those who follow Eastern, Native American or new religions generally do not accept the Bible as authoritative. Christians and Jews (and Muslims to a degree) accept the Bible as holy, but they differ greatly as to how it should be understood. Some accept the accounts--beginning with the story of creation--at face value. Others see the Bible as containing religious truth, but do not believe it is an authoritative history book or one that contains the full extent of God's revelations.

Background. *Decalogue* in Greek means "ten words," and some scholars think that it began as a list of very short moral sayings that existed long before the Bible time of Moses. Anyway, if one just looks at the general meaning of the Commandments--honoring one's God and parents, having days of rest, being truthful and respecting other people and their possessions--the Commandments are almost universal. Similar ideas are found in most societies. Nonetheless, in discussions concerning the public display of the Decalogue people almost always focus on the Bible.

The Biblical View. According to the Bible, the Ten Commandments were given by YHWH (pronounced Yahweh) to Moses at Mt. Sinai after he and his followers left Egypt and before they arrived in Canaan. Using Biblical chronology as understood by many Christians, these events occurred between 1300 and 1200 B.C.E. Following Bible accounts, the Commandments were on two stone tablets which the Israelites placed in a container called the Ark of the Covenant. After directions on how the Ark should be built, Yahweh says, "You shall put into the ark the covenant that I shall give

you." (Exodus 25: 16). The Israelites carried this Ark (with Commandment tablets inside) as they continued their nomadic life, eventually reaching the hill country of Canaan, their "Promised Land."

Continuing the Bible narrative, through war and diplomacy they made a place for themselves in this new homeland between the eastern end of the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River. The Ark (with the two Commandment tablets inside) was put in a tabernacle in Shiloh, a city north of Jerusalem. A tabernacle, in turn, was a movable, rectangular tent-like place for Yahweh. The Ark was taken from place to place until finally secured in the Temple that King Solomon built in Jerusalem.

Solomon was the third Israelite monarch, according to the Bible. It relates that the kingdom had started with Saul who was followed by David. King David captured Jerusalem from the Jebusites, made it his capital and brought the Ark of the Covenant to this location.

The kingdom was near its height when his son, Solomon took over. Solomon built the first temple to Yahweh in Jerusalem and placed the Ark of the Covenant within it. After Solomon's time, there's no further Biblical mention of the Ark or its contents.

A Scholarly View. History as we know it didn't exist in ancient times. The Biblical story of the Godly origins of the Decalogue and its early history with the Ark of the Covenant must be taken on faith. Most scholars see the account as similar to other ancient creation/history traditions--a mixture of earthly fact, supernatural belief and religious interpretation. Historians concern themselves with the earthly causes of earthly events. They also deal with historical documents, and Israelite written accounts date from no earlier than 900 B.C.E., Solomon's time.

Writing had been used in the Middle East for more than 2,000 years before his era. But, it consisted of picture-words that were difficult to master. To be literate, a scribe had to memorize thousands of word-symbols as the Chinese do today. Egyptian hieroglyphics were one such system, and cuneiform from Mesopotamia was another.

These ancient, complex Middle Eastern methods of writing did not affect the early Israelites very much. Until Solomon, they mostly had been a rural people, watching their sheep and goats and farming. They had little need for writing, and couldn't support a class of scribes anyway. By about 900 B.C.E. things had changed. Israel, with its king and court in Jerusalem, was as large and wealthy as it ever would be. Also, neighboring Canaanites had developed a new and simpler way of writing.

Various groups of Canaanites lived in towns along the Mediterranean coast, and they made their living through shipping and other large-scale trading enterprises. Greeks called them Phoenicians. Perhaps to simplify their commercial record-keeping, they started using symbols to represent human sounds. This new "phonic" (Phoenician) writing method spread throughout the area. Greeks borrowed the idea and began writing down their stories and oral histories. The Israelites did too.

The Phoenician alphabet had no vowels. It consisted of 22 letters, each standing for a consonant sound. Israelites took this consonant system and applied it to their Hebrew language, which was a Canaanite dialect. Perhaps when Solomon was building his temple to Yahweh, his scribes began recording their people's oral traditions. Richard Friedman, a Professor of Hebrew and Comparative Literature at the University of California in San Diego, says this would be the world's "first prose masterpiece." It begins with creation and extends to the "present time" of Solomon. It also becomes the account around which the Torah--and the Christian Old Testament--developed.

After Solomon died, his realm split into a southern kingdom of Judah and a northern kingdom of Israel.

The northern kingdom was defeated by the Assyrians in 722 B.C.E., and the Ten Tribes of Israel who lived there disappeared from history. Many were killed, became captives or fled south to Judah. Those who remained lost their Hebrew identity, becoming known as Samaritans. The southern kingdom of Judah with its center in Jerusalem lasted until 597 B.C.E. when it was conquered by the Babylonians. Leading Israelite families were taken away as captives to Mesopotamia where they remained until 538 B.C.E. These (almost 60) years are known as the Babylonian Captivity period. In 538 the Babylonians themselves were defeated, and the victorious Persians allowed the Hebrews to return and rebuild Jerusalem.

During these turbulent four centuries following Solomon, Israelite beliefs changed greatly. Yahweh had been the Israelites' chief god when Solomon built his temple, but other gods were thought to exist for other people. Solomon's numerous wives worshiped an assortment of deities, and he built shrines to honor many of them. By the end of the Babylonian Captivity, however, Hebrew religious leaders no longer believed other gods existed. The "one universal God" idea that gradually evolved is called monotheism.

The narratives and laws written between Solomon's time and the Babylonian Captivity continued to be thought of as divinely inspired. But as centuries went by and religious and moral concepts changed, the writings were re-edited. The original story was divided, rearranged, and new material was added primarily by four authors. Knowing this historical process helps us understand why there are four listings of the "Ten Commandments" found in the Bible--as well as helping us understand why they are different one from another.

The Four Biblical Decalogues

The Ten Commandments version in Exodus Chapter 34 is thought by many Biblical scholars to be closest to what may have existed in Solomon's time. They identify the author as the "J" author who lived in Judah. He is called "J" because he consistently uses YHWH (pronounced Yahweh) as the name of God. (The scholarly analysis first was worked out by Germans, and "J" in German sounds like the English "Y.")

From Exodus Chapter 34. *Note: Most English language Bible versions--like the New Revised Standard Version--substitue ""the LORD" for the Hebrew text's YHWH.*

The LORD said to Moses, "Cut two tablets of stone.... 2) Be ready in the morning, and come up in the morning to Mount Sinai and present yourself there to me, on the top of the mountain.... 5) The LORD descended in the cloud and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name, "The LORD." 6) The LORD passed before him, and proclaimed,

"The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, 7) keeping steadfast love for the thousandth generation, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, yet by no means clearing the guilty, but visiting the iniquity of the parents upon the children and the children's children to the third and the fourth generation. [The NRSV spaces this paragraph differently, as if lines in a poem.]

8) And Moses quickly bowed his head toward the earth, and worshiped. 9) He said "If now I have found favor in your sight, O Lord, I pray, let the Lord go with us. Although this is a stiff-necked people, pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us for your inheritance."

10) He said: I hereby make a covenant, Before all your people I will perform marvels, such as have not been performed in all the earth or in any nation; and all the people among whom you live shall see the work of the LORD; for it is an awesome thing that I will do with you.

11) Observe what I command you today. See, I will drive out before you the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. 12) Take care not to make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land to which you are going, or it will become a snare among you. 13) You shall tear down their altars, break their pillars, and cut down their sacred poles 14) for you shall worship no other god, because the LORD whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God). 15) You shall not make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land, for when they prostitute themselves to their gods and sacrifice to their gods, someone among them will invite you, and you will eat of the sacrifice. 16) And you will take wives from among their daughters for your sons, and their daughters who prostitute themselves to their gods will make your sons also prostitute themselves to their gods.

17) You shall not make cast idols.

18) You shall keep the festival of unleavened bread. Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread, as I commanded you, at the time appointed in the month of Abib; for in the month of Abib you came out from Egypt.

19) All that first opens the womb is mine, all your male livestock, the first-born of cow and sheep. 20) The firstborn of a donkey you shall redeem with a lamb, or if you will not redeem it you shall break its neck. All the firstborn of your sons you shall redeem.

No one shall appear before me empty-handed.

21) Six days you shall work, but on the seventh day you shall rest; even in plowing time and in harvest time you shall rest. 22) You shall observe the festival of weeks, the first fruits of wheat harvest, and the festival of ingathering at the turn of the year. 23) Three times in the year all your males shall appear before the LORD God, the God of Israel. 24) For I will cast out nations before you, and enlarge your borders; no one shall covet your land when you go up to appear before the LORD your God three times in the year.

25) You shall not offer the blood of my sacrifice with leaven, and the sacrifice of the festival of the passover shall not be left until the morning.

26) The best of the first fruits of your ground you shall bring to the house of the LORD your God.

You shall not boil a kid in its mother's milk.

27) The LORD said to Moses: Write these words; in accordance with these words I have made a covenant with you and with Israel. 28) He was there with the LORD forty days and forty nights; he neither ate bread nor drank water. And he wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant, the ten commandments.

This second listing of the Commandments comes from Exodus Chapter 20. It's author is known as "E" who reflects the northern kingdom's emphasis. He's known as "E" because he used the Hebrew word "Elohim" (which is translated as God) until his narrative says that Moses was told by God that his name was YHWH.

From Exodus Chapter 20

Then God spoke all these words: 2) I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery; 3) You shall have no other gods before me.

4) You shall not make for yourself an idol, whether in the form of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. 5) You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, punishing children for the iniquity of parents, to the third and fourth generation of those who reject me, 6) but showing steadfast love to the thousandth generation of those who love me and keep my commandments.

7) You shall not make wrongful use of the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not acquit anyone who misuses his name.

8) Remember the sabbath day, and keep it holy. 9) Six days you shall labor and do all your work. 10) But the seventh day is a sabbath to the LORD your God; you shall not do any work--you, your son or your daughter, your male or female slave, your livestock, or the alien resident in your towns. 11) For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea and all that is in them, but rested the seventh day; therefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day and consecrated it.

12) Honor your father and your mother, so that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you.

13) You shall not murder.

14) You shall not commit adultery.

15) You shall not steal.

16) You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

17) You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or male or female slave,or ox, or donkey or anything that belongs to your neighbor.

18) When all the people witnessed the thunder and lightening, the sound of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking they were afraid and trembled and stood at a distance, 19) and said to Moses, "You speak to us, and we will listen; but do not let God speak to us, or we will die. 20) Moses said to the people. "Do not be afraid; for God has come only to test you and to put the fear of him upon you so that you do not sin." 21) Then the people stood at a distance, while Moses drew near to the thick darkness where God was. [More commandments follow relating to altar construction, directions for sacrifices, instructions on the treatment of slaves, etcetera.]

From Leviticus Chapter 19

This is the "P" (or priestly) author's version of the Decalogue. Biblical scholars such as Richard Friedman say it was written after 722 B.C.E. Here Decalogue commandments are mixed with many other regulations, as in Exodus 34.

Among prohibitions against practicing witchcraft, cutting one's hair and having tattoos, one finds these rules: "You shall each revere your mother and father, and you shall keep my sabbaths....Do not turn to idols....You shall not steal; you shall not deal falsely; and you shall not lie to one another....you shall not swear falsely by my name....You shall not defraud your neighbor; you shall not steal....You shall not render an unjust judgment...You shall not go around as a slanderer." One also finds two Golden Rule-like commandments: "...you shall love your neighbor as yourself" and "The stranger...you shall love him as yourself."

From Deuteronomy Chapter 5. This likely was the last-written version of the Decalogue in the Jewish Bible.

Moses convened all Israel, and said to them:

Hear, O Israel, the statutes and ordinances that I am addressing to you today; you shall learn them and observe them diligently. 2) The LORD our God made a covenant with us at Horeb. 3) Not with our ancestors did the LORD make this covenant, but with us, who are all of us here alive today . 4) The LORD spoke with you face to face at the mountain, out of the fire. 5) At that time I was standing between the LORD and you to declare to you the words of the LORD; for you were afraid because of the fire and did not go up the mountain.) And he said:

6) I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery; 7) you shall have no other gods before me.

8) You shall not make for yourself an idol, whether in the form of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. 9) You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, punishing children for the iniquity of parents, to the third and fourth generation of those who reject me 10) but showing steadfast love to the thousandth generation of those who love me and keep my commandments.

11) You shall not make wrongful use of the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not acquit anyone who misuses his name.

12) Observe the sabbath day and keep it holy, as the LORD your God commanded you. 13) Six days you shall labor and do all your work. 14) But the seventh day is a sabbath to the LORD your God; you shall not do any work--you, or your son or your daughter, or your male or female slave, or your ox or your donkey, or any of your livestock, or the resident alien in your towns, so that your male and female slave may rest as well as you. 15) Remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God brought you out from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm; therefore the LORD your God commanded you to keep the sabbath day.

16) Honor your father and your mother, as the LORD your God commanded you, so that your days may be long and that it may go well with you in the land that the LORD your God is giving you.

17) You shall not murder.

18) Neither shall you commit adultery.

19) Neither shall you steal.

20) Neither shall you bear false witness against your neighbor.

21) Neither shall you covet your neighbor's wife.

Neither shall you desire your neighbor's house, or field, or male or female slave, or ox, or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.

22)These words the LORD spoke with a loud voice to your whole assembly at the mountain, out of the fire, the cloud, and the thick darkness, and he adds no more. He wrote them on two stone tablets, and gave them to me.

New Testament Decalogue References

Now consider the New Testament part of the Christian Bible. The Decalogue is repeatedly commented upon, and again the Commandments are reinterpreted. Here are several selections from the Gospel of Matthew and one from Romans:

In Matthew, Chapter 5, verses 21-22 and 27-29 Jesus says:

21) "You have heard that it was said to those of ancient times, 'You should not murder'; and whoever murders shall be liable to judgment. 22) But I say to you that if you are angry with a brother or sister, you will be liable to judgment; and if you insult a brother or sister, you will be liable to the council; and if you say, 'You fool' you will be liable to the hell of fire."

27) "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery. 28) But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart. 29) If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away; it is better for you to lose one of your members than for your whole body to be thrown into hell."

The prohibitions against murder, adultery, stealing, and lying are found in Matthew, Chapter 19. After the listing, in verse 19 Jesus is presented as saying "Honor your father and mother; also, You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

In Matthew, Chapter 22, verses 36-40 one reads:

"Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?" [Jesus] said to him, " 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the greatest and the first commandment. And a second is like it, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets "

In Romans, Chapter 13, verses 9-10 Paul of Tarsus (St. Paul) says:

The commandments, "You shall not commit adultery; You shall not murder; You shall not steal; You shall not covet"; and any other commandment, are summed up in this word, "Love your neighbor as yourself." Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law.

In these New Testament references punishments have changed. No longer are children, grandchildren and great grandchildren being rewarded and punished by Yahweh for what their forefather did. Instead, the person's soul is held accountable in an afterlife. This change from earthly punishments to soul-concepts began during the Captivity period and continued when, later, the Greeks controlled the entire area.

Modern Abridged Decalogues

Few groups of Christians want New Testament quotes made into public displays nor do they suggest that the "J" or "P" forms of the Decalogue be used either. Exodus 34 doesn't even mention such things as murder, theft and adultery, and Leviticus has commonly-understood commandments jumbled with all sorts of other prohibitions. Instead, the focus is on the Ten Commandments drawn from the edited "E" source in Exodus and from Deuteronomy. However, these are not used in their entirety either. The Biblical passages are long and contain ideas most modern people reject.

For example, in the ancient world slavery was taken for granted. The important issues involved various kinds of slavery and how slaves should be treated. Only recently has the institution itself been condemned, as we know from our own American history. Also, the punishments described in all versions make most people--even believers--cringe. In both one reads of children rightly being punished by God for their father's evil acts. Grandchildren and even great grandchildren are accountable for their ancestor's sins! As a result, Christians almost always edit the Biblical material when they construct their short versions of Ten Commandments that they want to display.

Here are two examples. The first is from the Catholic *Catechism*. Anglicans and Lutherans have similar listings. Many Christian groups use the second one. Jews have no comparable "edited listing" of the Decalogue that receives special emphasis. Some leaders think the focus on a short, "out of context" list reflects Christian bias.

A short Catholic Listing from the *Catechism* using the *Revised Standard Version*

1. I am the LORD your God: you shall not have strange Gods before me. (Exodus 20, vs.1-5)
2. You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain. (v. 7)
3. Remember to keep holy the LORD's Day. (vs. 8-10)
4. Honor your father and your mother. (v. 12)
5. You shall not kill. (v. 13)
6. You shall not commit adultery. (v. 14)
7. You shall not steal. (v. 15)
8. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. (v. 16)
9. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife. (Deuteronomy 5, v. 21)
10. You shall not covet your neighbor's goods. (Deuteronomy 5, v.21)

Another short Christian Listing from a world history text using the *King James Version*

1. I am the Lord thy God.... Thou shalt have no other gods before me. (Exodus 20, v. 3)
2. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image... (vs. 4-6)
3. Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain... (v. 7)
4. Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. (vs. 8-11)
5. Honor thy father and thy mother... (v. 12)
6. Thou shalt not kill. (v. 13)
7. Thou shalt not commit adultery. (v. 14)
8. Thou shalt not steal. (v.15)
9. Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor. (v. 16)
10. Thou shalt not covet...anything that is thy neighbor's. (v. 17)

Should the Decalogue be a Governmental Guide for Morality?

1. Is a governmental focus on the Ten Commandments likely to promote general public morality? Or, will such institutional efforts to post some version be more likely to cause conflicts between people with various views on religion and between some people and the government? Are there better alternatives?

2. If you think Constitutional prohibitions concerning the establishment of religion can be avoided, how is this to be done? (The first Commandments clearly require the belief and practice of religion.)

3. Why do some Christian groups want to use their Old Testament formulations of the Decalogue instead of the interpretations in their New Testament which have more focus on Golden Rule-like directives? Would a Golden Rule message provide a better foundation for a public attempt to influence morality in the United States today? (Note: It long has been used as a guideline for moral behavior in the United States. By 1896--if not earlier--it was included in *McGuffey's Fourth Eclective Reader* used by students for years. When growing up, many Americans looked at the motto, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you" on their classroom walls. It frequently was printed on rulers and elsewhere as a reminder of how to conduct oneself.)

4. If you assume some version the Decalogue has public usefulness, which of the many translations available should be used? Why? What editing should be permissible and why? Who should do it?

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Our era is a time of great cultural, technological and economic change, and many people think they see increased anti-social behavior and mistreatment of others. They also believe that there has been an upswing of selfish and rude behavior, immorality, and unethical acts.[1] Their efforts to deal with these situations have resulted in social and political conflicts. One dispute in America revolves around the Biblical Decalogue--the Ten Commandments.

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[1] *Slouching Toward Gomorrah* by Robert Bork is an expression of these fears. Part I begins with a chapter entitled "The Vertical Invasion of the Barbarians," and the first chapter in Part II is on "The Collapse of Popular Culture."

[2] "The Ten Commandments became a fixed part of Christian catechetical practices and worship. [Although less] prominent in Islam, they are implicit in much that Muhammad taught." Harrelson, *Encyclopedia of Religion*, Vol. 14, page 396.

[3] "...the Ten Commandments evolved and except for those dealing exclusively with obligations toward Yahweh reflect ancient tribal wisdom." John Craghan, "Ten Commandments, The." *The Modern Catholic Encyclopedia*, p. 855.

The Biblical View. According to the Bible, the Ten Commandments were given by YHWH (pronounced Yahweh)[4] to Moses at Mt. Sinai after he and his followers left Egypt and before they arrived in Canaan. Using Biblical chronology as understood by many Christians, these events occurred between 1300 and 1200 B.C.E.[5] Following Bible accounts, the Commandments were on two stone tablets which the Israelites placed in a container called the Ark of the Covenant. After directions on how the Ark should be built, Yahweh says, "You shall put into the ark the covenant that I shall give you." (Exodus 25: 16).[6] The Israelites carried this Ark (with Commandment tablets inside) as they continued their nomadic life, eventually reaching the hill country of Canaan, their "Promised Land."

Continuing the Bible narrative, through war and diplomacy they made a place for themselves in this new homeland between the eastern end of the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River. The Ark (with the two Commandment tablets inside) was put in a tabernacle in Shiloh, a city north of Jerusalem. A tabernacle was a "movable sanctuary in the form of a [rectangular] tent."[7] The Ark was taken from place to place until finally secured in the Temple that King Solomon built in Jerusalem.

Solomon was the third Israelite monarch, according to the Bible. It relates that the kingdom had started with Saul who was followed by David. King David captured Jerusalem from the Jebusites, made it his capital and brought the Ark of the Covenant to this location.[8]

The kingdom was near its height when his son, Solomon took over. Solomon built the first temple to Yahweh in Jerusalem and placed the Ark of the Covenant within it. After Solomon's time, there's no further Biblical mention of the Ark or its contents.

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[4] See "Source Analysis" for a detailed explanation of the origins of the word *Jehovah*.

[5] This dating comes from *Eerdmans' Handbook to the Bible* , "Old Testament history at a Glance," p. 119. Many Christians believe--as do the authors and editors of *Eerdmans'*-- that Yahweh gave Moses a "basic ethical norm applicable to all men in all ages" (page 164.) However, no historical references to Moses exist outside of the Bible, and there are Biblical scholars who doubt that Moses ever existed. For one such statement see "Of Myth and Men: A closer look at the originators of the major religions--what did they really say and do" in the Winter, 1999/00 issue of *Free Inquiry*, pp. 27-29. There is a variety of scholarly judgments that fall between these very different understandings.

[6] *New Revised Standard Version*. Also see Deuteronomy 10. 3-5; I Kings 8, 9 and other biblical sources that are referenced in standard Bible Dictionaries.

[7] *The New Westminster Dictionary of the Bible*, p.919. For an extensive description of the Israelite Tabernacle see "The Sacred Tent," Chapter 10 of Friedman's book, *Who Wrote the Bible?*, pp. 174-187.

[8] According to the Bible, the Ark was captured for a short period of time by the Philistines, a group that had invaded Canaan from the sea and established themselves along parts of the coast. After getting the Ark back, the Israelites kept it at the town of Kiriath-Jearim until it was taken to Jerusalem by David and put in a tabernacle/tent. Solomon then placed it in his temple. Whether " it was among 'the treasures of the house of the lord' ...carried off by Shishak (c 950 B.C.), or whether it was...ultimately destroyed by the soldiers of Nebuchadnezzar (586 B.C.), it is impossible to say." From the *Dictionary of the Bible* edited by James Hastings, p. 53.

A Scholarly View. History as we know it didn't exist in ancient times. The Biblical story of the Godly origins of the Decalogue and its early history with the Ark of the Covenant must be taken on faith. Most scholars see the account as similar to other ancient creation/history traditions--a mixture of earthly fact, supernatural belief and religious interpretation. Historians concern themselves with the earthly causes of earthly events. They also deal with historical documents, and Israelite written documents date from no earlier than 900 B.C.E., Solomon's time.

Writing had been used in the Middle East for more than 2,000 years before his era. But, it consisted of picture-words that were difficult to master. To be literate, a scribe had to memorize thousands of word-symbols as the Chinese do today. Egyptian hieroglyphics were one such system, and cuneiform from Mesopotamia was another.[9]

These ancient, complex Middle Eastern methods of writing did not affect the early Israelites very much. Until Solomon, they mostly had been a rural people, watching their sheep and goats and farming. They had little need for writing, and couldn't support a class of scribes anyway.[10] By about 900 B.C.E. things had changed. Israel, with its king and court in Jerusalem, was as large and wealthy as it ever would be. Also, neighboring Canaanites had developed a new and simpler way of writing.

Various groups of Canaanites lived in towns along the Mediterranean coast, and they made their living through shipping and other large-scale trading enterprises. Greeks called them Phoenicians. Perhaps to simplify their commercial record-keeping, they started using symbols to represent human sounds. This new "phonic" (Phoenician) writing method spread throughout the area. Greeks borrowed the idea and began writing down their stories and oral histories.[11] The Israelites did too.

The Phoenician alphabet had no vowels. It consisted of 22 letters, each standing for a consonant sound. Israelites took this consonant system and applied it to their Hebrew language, which was a Canaanite dialect. Perhaps when Solomon was building his temple to Yahweh, his scribes began recording their people's oral traditions.[12] Richard Friedman, a Professor of Hebrew and Comparative Literature at the University of California in San Diego, says this would be the world's "first prose masterpiece." It begins with creation and extends to the "present time" of Solomon. It also becomes the account around which the Torah--and the Christian Old Testament--developed.[13]

After Solomon died, his realm split into a southern kingdom of Judah and a northern kingdom of Israel.

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[9] Mesopotamia is the land between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers. This area is now part of Iraq.

[10] In early times writing was restricted to small numbers of city-dwelling scribes who worked for merchants, religious leaders and rulers. Common people--especially those in rural areas--were illiterate. These ancient patterns continue to exist in some parts of the world today.

[11] The *Iliad* and *Odyssey* of Homer are in this category.

[12] Gerald A. Larue, *Freethought Across the Centuries*, p. 107.

[13] See *The Hidden Book in the Bible: The Discovery of the First Prose Masterpiece*.

The northern kingdom was defeated by the Assyrians in 722 B.C.E., and the Ten Tribes of Israel who lived there disappeared from history. Many were killed, became captives or fled south to Judah. Those who remained lost their Hebrew identity, becoming known as Samaritans. The southern kingdom of Judah with its center in Jerusalem lasted until 597 B.C.E. when it was conquered by the Babylonians. Leading Israelite families were taken away as captives to Mesopotamia where they remained until 538 B.C.E. These (almost 60) years are known as the Babylonian Captivity period.[14] In 538 the Babylonians themselves were defeated, and the victorious Persians allowed the Hebrews to return and rebuild Jerusalem.

During these turbulent four centuries following Solomon, Israelite beliefs changed greatly. Yahweh had been the Israelites' chief god when Solomon built his temple, but other gods were thought to exist for other people. Solomon's numerous wives worshiped an assortment of deities, and he built shrines to honor many of them.[15] By the end of the Babylonian Captivity, however, Hebrew religious leaders no longer believed other gods existed. The "one universal God" idea that evolved is called monotheism.[16]

The narratives and laws written between Solomon's time and the Babylonian Captivity continued to be thought of as divinely inspired. But as centuries went by and religious and moral concepts changed, the writings were re-edited. The original story was divided, rearranged, and new material was added primarily by four authors. Knowing this historical process helps us understand why there are four listings of the "Ten Commandments" found in the Bible--as well as helping us understand why they are different one from another.

The Four Biblical Decalogues

The Ten Commandments version in Exodus Chapter 34 is thought by many Biblical scholars to be closest to what may have existed in Solomon's time. They identify the author as "J" (or the Yahwistic author) who lived in Judah. He is called "J" because he consistently uses YHWH (Yahweh) as the name of God. (The scholarly analysis first was worked out by Germans, and "J" in German sounds like the English "Y.")

The second listing of the Commandments comes from Exodus Chapter 20. It's author is known as "E" (or the Elohist author). He reflects the northern kingdom's understanding of Solomon's epic. The "P" (or priestly) author's version of the

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[14] Many Jews were kept in Babylon itself. Others lived close Nippur and Ur in an area they called Tel Aviv, or Springtime Hill. (Armstrong. A History of God, pp. 57-58.) The terms *Israelites* and *Hebrews* are used more or less interchangeably through the end of the Babylonian captivity period. Thereafter, the people are increasingly referred to as "Jews"--a name coming from their homeland of Judah.

[15] Some of these were located on the Mount of Olives--which he built at or near the time he was constructing his main temple to YHWH in Jerusalem. Larue. *Freethought Across the Centuries.*, p. 109.

[16] Jews are credited for developing monotheism. Note, however, that the concept gradually evolved. The Jews "move toward monotheism" was a process that accelerated during the Babylonian captivity.

Decalogue was written after 722 B.C.E. but before 609 B.C.E. It's found in Leviticus 19. The Deuteronomy (Chapter 5) Decalogue appears to have been the the last to have been written--between 622 and 538 B.C.E, when the Babylonian exile period ended.

We are using *New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)* of the Bible.[17] The *NRSV* editors follow the often-used practice of substituting "LORD" (all capitalized and usually "the LORD") for "YHWH" (Yahweh), the original Hebrew name of God.

From Exodus Chapter 34.

The LORD said to Moses, "Cut two tablets of stone.... 2) Be ready in the morning, and come up in the morning to Mount Sinai and present yourself there to me, on the top of the mountain.... 5) The LORD descended in the cloud and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name, "The LORD." 6) The LORD passed before him, and proclaimed,

"The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, 7) keeping steadfast love for the thousandth generation, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, yet by no means clearing the guilty, but visiting the iniquity of the parents upon the children and the children's children to the third and the fourth generation. [The NRSV spaces this paragraph differently, as if lines in a poem.]

8) And Moses quickly bowed his head toward the earth, and worshiped. 9) He said "If now I have found favor in your sight, O Lord, I pray, let the Lord go with us. Although this is a stiff-necked people, pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us for your inheritance."

10) He said: I hereby make a covenant. Before all your people I will perform marvels, such as have not been performed in all the earth or in any nation; and all the people among whom you live shall see the work of the LORD; for it is an awesome thing that I will do with you.

11) Observe what I command you today. See, I will drive out before you the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. 12) Take care not to make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land to which you are going, or it will become a snare among you. 13) You shall tear down their altars, break their pillars, and cut down their sacred poles 14) for you shall worship no other god, because the LORD whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God). 15) You shall not make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land, for when they prostitute themselves to their gods and sacrifice to their gods, someone among them will invite you, and you will eat of the sacrifice. 16) And you will take wives from among their daughters for your sons, and their daughters who prostitute themselves to their gods will make your sons also prostitute themselves to their gods.

17) You shall not make cast idols.

18) You shall keep the festival of unleavened bread. Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread, as I commanded you, at the time appointed in the month of Abib; for in the month of Abib you came out from Egypt.

19) All that first opens the womb is mine, all your male livestock, the first-born of cow and sheep. 20) The firstborn of a donkey you shall redeem with a lamb, or if you will not redeem it you shall break its neck. All the firstborn of your sons you shall redeem.

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[17] The *New Revised Standard Version* was published in 1989. For clarity, verse numbers have been spaced using parentheses. These numbers were not in the old Bible texts. What one considers the "best" translation depends heavily upon a person's religious orientation. The King James English version remains popular. There are numerous new English language translations including the *New International Version* (NIV) that Richard John Neuhaus, editor of *First Things*, says has much to recommend it, and is a popular seller. However, he believes the older, *Revised Standard Version* of 1946 and 1952 "is, all in all, the best in English." See "While We're At it," *First Things*, No. 100, Feb., 00, p. 85. The journal is a Catholic-oriented publication. The *Revised Standard Version* remains the authorized version for the Roman Catholic Church and some other denominations.

No one shall appear before me empty-handed.

21) Six days you shall work, but on the seventh day you shall rest; even in plowing time and in harvest time you shall rest. 22) You shall observe the festival of weeks, the first fruits of wheat harvest, and the festival of ingathering at the turn of the year. 23) Three times in the year all your males shall appear before the LORD God, the God of Israel. 24) For I will cast out nations before you, and enlarge your borders; no one shall covet your land when you go up to appear before the LORD your God three times in the year.

25) You shall not offer the blood of my sacrifice with leaven, and the sacrifice of the festival of the passover shall not be left until the morning.

26) The best of the first fruits of your ground you shall bring to the house of the LORD your God. You shall not boil a kid in its mother's milk.

27) The LORD said to Moses: Write these words; in accordance with these words I have made a covenant with you and with Israel. 28) He was there with the LORD forty days and forty nights; he neither ate bread nor drank water. And he wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant, the ten commandments.

The Ten Commandments from Exodus Chapter 20 is the one most familiar to Jews and Christians today. It's unknown author focuses more on events in the northern kingdom of Israel. He is called "E" because he used the Hebrew word "Elohim" (which is translated as God) until, in the narrative, Moses meets God--who declares that his name is YHWH. Again, the *NRSV* translators use LORD, not YHWH (Yahweh)

From Exodus Chapter 20

Then God spoke all these words: 2) I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery; 3) You shall have no other gods before me.

4) You shall not make for yourself an idol, whether in the form of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. 5) You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, punishing children for the iniquity of parents, to the third and fourth generation of those who reject me, 6) but showing steadfast love to the thousandth generation of those who love me and keep my commandments.

7) You shall not make wrongful use of the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not acquit anyone who misuses his name.

8) Remember the sabbath day, and keep it holy. 9) Six days you shall labor and do all your work. 10) But the seventh day is a sabbath to the LORD your God; you shall not do any work--you, your son or your daughter, your male or female slave, your livestock, or the alien resident in your towns. 11) For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea and all that is in them, but rested the seventh day; therefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day and consecrated it.

12) Honor your father and your mother, so that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you.

13) You shall not murder.

14) You shall not commit adultery.

15) You shall not steal.

16) You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

17) You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or male or female slave,or ox, or donkey or anything that belongs to your neighbor.

18) When all the people witnessed the thunder and lightening, the sound of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking they were afraid and trembled and stood at a distance, 19) and said to Moses, "You speak to us, and we will listen; but do not let God speak to us, or we will die. 20) Moses said to the people. "Do not be afraid; for God has come only to test you and to put the fear of him upon you so

that you do not sin." 21) Then the people stood at a distance, while Moses drew near to the thick darkness where God was.

More commandments follow. These relate to altar construction, directions for sacrifices, instructions on how slaves should be treated (including how daughters can be sold into slavery) and other issues.

Leviticus Chapter 19 is the "P" (or priestly) author's version of the Decalogue. Biblical scholars such as Richard Friedman say it was written after 722 B.C.E. Here one finds Decalogue commandments mixed with many other regulations, as in Exodus 34.

Among prohibitions against practicing witchcraft, cutting one's hair and having tattoos, there are these rules: "You shall each revere your mother and father, and you shall keep my sabbaths....Do not turn to idols....You shall not steal; you shall not deal falsely; and you shall not lie to one another....you shall not swear falsely by my name....You shall not defraud your neighbor; you shall not steal....You shall not render an unjust judgment...You shall not go around as a slanderer."

Golden Rule commandments also are in Leviticus 19: "...you shall love your neighbor as yourself" (v. 18) and "The stranger...you shall love him as yourself" (v. 34).

From Deuteronomy Chapter 5. This likely was the last-written version of the Decalogue in the Jewish Bible.

Moses convened all Israel, and said to them:

Hear, O Israel, the statutes and ordinances that I am addressing to you today; you shall learn them and observe them diligently. 2) The LORD our God made a covenant with us at Horeb. 3) Not with our ancestors did the LORD make this covenant, but with us, who are all of us here alive today . 4) The LORD spoke with you face to face at the mountain, out of the fire. 5) At that time I was standing between the LORD and you to declare to you the words of the LORD; for you were afraid because of the fire and did not go up the mountain.) And he said:

6) I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery: 7) you shall have no other gods before me.

8) You shall not make for yourself an idol, whether in the form of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. 9) You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, punishing children for the iniquity of parents, to the third and fourth generation of those who reject me 10) but showing steadfast love to the thousandth generation of those who love me and keep my commandments.

11) You shall not make wrongful use of the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not acquit anyone who misuses his name.

12) Observe the sabbath day and keep it holy, as the LORD your God commanded you. 13) Six days you shall labor and do all your work. 14) But the seventh day is a sabbath to the LORD your God; you shall not do any work--you, or your son or your daughter, or your male or female slave, or your ox or your donkey, or any of your livestock, or the resident alien in your towns, so that your male and female slave may rest as well as you. 15) Remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God brought you out from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm; therefore the LORD your God commanded you to keep the sabbath day.

16) Honor your father and your mother, as the LORD your God commanded you, so that your days may be long and that it may go well with you in the land that the LORD your God is giving you.

17) You shall not murder.

18) Neither shall you commit adultery.

19) Neither shall you steal.

20) Neither shall you bear false witness against your neighbor.

21) Neither shall you covet your neighbor's wife.
Neither shall you desire your neighbor's house, or field, or male or female slave, or ox, or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.
22)These words the LORD spoke with a loud voice to your whole assembly at the mountain, out of the fire, the cloud, and the thick darkness, and he adds no more. He wrote them on two stone tablets, and gave them to me.

New Testament Decalogue References

Now consider the New Testament part of the Christian Bible. The Decalogue is repeatedly commented upon, and again the Commandments are reinterpreted.[18] Here are several selections from the Gospel of Matthew and one from Romans:

In Matthew, Chapter 5, verses 21-22 and 27-29 Jesus says:

21) "You have heard that it was said to those of ancient times, 'You should not murder'; and whoever murders shall be liable to judgment. 22) But I say to you that if you are angry with a brother or sister, you will be liable to judgment; and if you insult a brother or sister, you will be liable to the council; and if you say, 'You fool' you will be liable to the hell of fire."
27) "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery. 28) But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart. 29) If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away; it is better for you to lose one of your members than for your whole body to be thrown into hell."

The prohibitions against murder, adultery, stealing, and lying are found in Matthew, Chapter 19. After the listing, in verse 19 Jesus is presented as saying "Honor your father and mother; also, You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

In Matthew, Chapter 22, verses 36-40 one reads:

"Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?" [Jesus] said to him, " 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the greatest and the first commandment. And a second is like it, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'[19] On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets."

In Romans, Chapter 13, verses 9-10 Paul of Tarsus (St. Paul) says:

The commandments, "You shall not commit adultery; You shall not murder; You shall not steal; You shall not covet"; and any other commandment, are summed up in this word, "Love your neighbor as yourself." Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law.

In these New Testament references punishments have changed. No longer are children, grandchildren and great grandchildren being rewarded and punished by Yahweh for what their forefather did. Instead, the person's soul is held accountable in an afterlife. This change from earthly punishments to soul-concepts began during the Captivity period and continued when, later, the Greeks controlled the entire area.[20]

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[18] Also see Mark 10: 17-21 and Luke 18: 18-22. The New Testament has no single, complete listing of the Ten Commandments nor does it refer to them in a global way. However, "the individual precepts of the decalogue are more frequently cited in the NT than they are in the OT." Raymond Collins, "The Ten Commandments" in the *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, p. 386.

[19] Note the parallel with Leviticus here and in the following quote from Romans.

[20] See the Appendix for a descriptions of Zoroastrian-like influences on the Jews and Christians.

Modern Abridged Decalogues

Few groups of Christians want New Testament quotes made into public displays nor do they suggest that the "J" or "P" forms of the Decalogue be used either. Exodus 34 doesn't even mention such things as murder, theft and adultery, and Leviticus has commonly-understood commandments jumbled with all sorts of other prohibitions. Instead, the focus is on the Ten Commandments drawn from the edited "E" source in Exodus and from Deuteronomy. However, these are not used in their entirety either. The Biblical passages are long and contain ideas most modern people reject.

For example, in the ancient world slavery was taken for granted. The important issues involved various kinds of slavery and how slaves should be treated. Only recently has the institution itself been condemned, as we know from our own American history. Also, the punishments described in all versions make most people--even believers--cringe. In both one reads of children rightly being punished by God for their father's evil acts. Grandchildren and even great grandchildren are accountable for their ancestor's sins! As a result, Christians almost always edit the Biblical material when they construct their short versions of Ten Commandments that they want to display.

Here are two examples. The first is from the Catholic *Catechism*.[21] Anglicans and Lutherans have similar listings. Many Christian groups use the second one. Jews have no comparable "edited listing" of the Decalogue that receives special emphasis. Some leaders think the focus on a short, "out of context" list reflects Christian bias.

A short Catholic Listing from the *Catechism* using the *Revised Standard Version*

1. I am the LORD your God: you shall not have strange Gods before me. (Exodus 20, vs. 1-5)
2. You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain. (v. 7)
3. Remember to keep holy the LORD's Day. (vs. 8-10)
4. Honor your father and your mother. (v. 12)
5. You shall not kill. (v. 13)
6. You shall not commit adultery. (v. 14)
7. You shall not steal. (v. 15)
8. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. (v. 16)
9. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife. (Deuteronomy 5, v. 21)
10. You shall not covet your neighbor's goods. (Deuteronomy 5, v.21)

Another short Christian Listing from a world history text using the *King James Version*

1. I am the Lord thy God.... Thou shalt have no other gods before me. (Exodus 20, v. 3)
2. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image... (vs. 4-6)
3. Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain... (v. 7)
4. Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. (vs. 8-11)
5. Honor thy father and thy mother... (v. 12)
6. Thou shalt not kill. (v. 13)
7. Thou shalt not commit adultery.(v. 14)
8. Thou shalt not steal. (v.15)
9. Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor. (v. 16)
10. Thou shalt not covet...anything that is thy neighbor's. (v. 17)

[21] The *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1994, p. 803.

Should the Decalogue be a Governmental Guide for Morality?

1. Is a governmental focus on the Ten Commandments likely to promote general public morality? Or, will such institutional efforts to post some version be more likely to cause conflicts between people with various views on religion and between some people and the government? Are there better alternatives?

2. If you think Constitutional prohibitions concerning the establishment of religion can be avoided, how is this to be done? (The first Commandments clearly require the belief and practice of religion.)

3. Why do some Christian groups want to use their Old Testament formulations of the Decalogue instead of the interpretations in their New Testament which have more focus on Golden Rule-like directives. Would a Golden Rule message such as "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you" provide a better foundation for a public attempt to influence morality in the United States today?

Note: The Golden Rule long has been used as a guideline for moral behavior in the United States. By 1896--if not earlier--it was included in *McGuffey's Fourth Eclective Reader*. (See Selection 51, "The Golden Rule.") When growing up, many Americans spent school years looking at the motto, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you" on their classroom walls. The Golden Rule also frequently was printed on rulers and other objects as a reminder of how to conduct oneself.

4. If you assume some version the Decalogue has public usefulness, which of the many translations available should be used? Why? What editing should be permissible and why? Who should do it?

A history question: Why are there **two** stone tablets for the Commandments?

The model appears to have been treaties made by local kings at the time. Rulers of the Hittites, for instance, chiseled their state agreements on rock slabs. One stone they kept for themselves, and the second was for the ruler of the other state. According to Bible authors, the complete listing of laws "document"--with its introductory and concluding material--was a covenant (binding agreement) between the Israelites and Yahweh. Yahweh told Moses that his people were to get to their promised land and they would be victorious over enemies **if** they obeyed all of his commandments.

This covenant was the last of three that is described in the Torah as being made between Yahweh and the Israelites. The first was with Noah. Yahweh promised that there would be no more flood-like destructions. In the second, Yahweh guaranteed Abraham continued descendants and their own land.[22]

[22]See the *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, Vol. 6 entries on the "Ten Commandments" by Raymond Collins, page 384, and "Torah (Pentateuch)" by Richard Friedman on pages 605-06.

Source Analysis

Introduction: Source analysis is central to historical study, and the focus is difficult when one is concerned with young people and teaching about holy book material. There is a need to navigate between uncritical, non-scholarly acceptance and the debunking that feeds into youthful tendencies toward cynicism.

We believe that "The Decalogue: Student Reading" will be acceptable to a broad range of students and their parents. At the same time, teaching effectively means the instructor must have a firm authority base. He or she must know much more about a topic than what is in the student text. Therefore, we've included these "Source Analysis" notes, an extensively footnoted "Teacher's Edition" of the reading, an Appendix on Zoroastrianism and a Bibliography of our main sources. Our analysis primarily is based on Richard Elliot Friedman's two books, *Who Wrote the Bible* and *The Hidden Book of the Bible* and his "Torah" entry in the *Anchor Bible Dictionary*.

A. Scholarly research is on-going, and understanding changes as new data is unearthed. Historical materials should be presented as an authoritative current view but subject to modification. Origins of the alphabet provide an example. Historians generally have agreed that phonics originated in the Levant (modern Syria, Israel and Lebanon), but this "fact" is now questioned. *Discover*, March, 2000, has a short article called "Dawn of the ABCs" on page 13 of its "R&D" news section:

> Two 18-inch stone inscriptions, carved into the rock walls on a barren desert valley in southern Egypt, are the world's oldest alphabetic graffiti. Nearby Egyptian hieroglyphics indicate that the inscriptions were made around 1800 B.C., hundreds of years before any previously recognized written alphabet.... "We can recognize the letters and see how they evolved into modern forms...." says P. Kyle McCarter Jr. of Johns Hopkins University, an expert on the archaic alphabet. ... McCarter has identified the words 'chief' or 'leader'." [The carvings are in a] wasteland...shortcut from Luxor to Thebes, across a bend in the Nile.

However, we should not abandon years of research on the basis of a bit of "new evidence" that may or may not be verified by other scholars as time goes by.

B. Friedman says serious study of who wrote Bible segments (and when) has been going on "for nearly a thousand years," and "extraordinary discoveries" have been made since 1800. This investigation, he says, "did not develop as a controversy of religion versus science or religion versus the secular. On the contrary, most of the investigators were trained in religious traditions and knew the Bible as well as those who accepted only the traditional answers. Indeed, from the outset to the present day, a significant proportion of the critical biblical scholars, perhaps the majority, have been, at the same time members of the clergy." [1] Further, analysis "simply began with individuals raising questions about problems that they observed in the Biblical text itself. It proceeded like a detective story spread across centuries, with investigators uncovering clues to the Bible's origin one by one."[2]

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[1] Friedman. *Who Wrote the Bible?*, p. 15.

[2] Friedman, p. 17.

Briefly stated, there is "evidence that the Five Books of Moses were composed by combining four different source documents into one continuous history."[3] Each of these source authors is referred to by a letter. There are the J, E, P and D authors, and a variation of the Ten Commandments is found in each of their writings.

The "J" material--including the Decalogue in Exodus 34--was Judah's version of the Solomonic story. "E" reflects the northern Kingdom's account, but the text in the Bible was written in Judah after Israel's destruction in 722 B.C.E.[4] The "P" (priestly) author's version of the Decalogue that's found in Leviticus 19 also was written after 722 but before 609 B.C.[5] Deuteronomy (the D author) was written somewhat later. "The book that the priest Hilkiah said he found in the Temple in 622 B.C. was Deuteronomy.[6] It "was written not long before it was 'found' in the Temple, and the 'finding' was...to provide grounds for Josiah's religious reform."[7] We have listed the Decalogues in the general order that Friedman believes they were written.[8] Possibly all have been somewhat altered by later editors.

Biblical scholars--except for those in orthodox Jewish and fundamentalist Christian groups--accept this general understanding. Academically trained rabbis, priests, and ministers also are aware of this scholarship, and many accept it. However, they often are reluctant to discuss it with their more Fundamentalist-inclined congregations.[9]

C. The Ten Commandments are in material first written before 500 B.C.E, but no Bible manuscripts from before or during the Babylonian Captivity exist. The Dead Sea Scrolls are the oldest materials that have parts of the books of the Hebrew Bible (except for Esther). However, the oldest of these date from only about 300 B.C.E. Most are from the first century B.C.E.[10] Other Biblical sources are less ancient.[11]

Older sources with Bible-like themes do exist. The Epic of Gilgamesh includes a similar flood story, for instance. It was first written on cuneiform tablets made more

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[3] Friedman, p. 24.

[4] Friedman, p. 101, 258.

[5] Friedman, p. 210.

[6] Friedman, p. 101.

[7] Friedman, pp. 101-02. This reform consisted mostly of centralizing Yahweh worship in Jerusalem.

[8] "These first books of the Bible had as extraordinary a manner of composition as any book on earth. Imagine assigning four different people to write a book on the same subject, then taking their four different versions and cutting them up and combining them into one long, continuous account, then claiming that the account was all by one person. Then imagine giving the book to detectives and leaving them to figure out (1) that the book was not by one person, (2) that it was by four, (3) who the four were, and (4) who combined them." Friedman, pp. 53-54. For Friedman's definite statement see the "Torah (Pentateuch)" entry in the *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, Vol. VI, pp. 605-622 that he authored.

[9] For a comprehensive statement on the current state of acceptance among Catholic and Protestant scholars see "The Present State", *Who Wrote the Bible?*, pp.27-28.

[10] *The New Westminster Dictionary of the Bible*, pp. 217-18.

[11] Page xii of the *New Revised Standard Version* details sources that the translators used.

than a thousand years before Solomon's time. Many experts also see similarities between the Israelite's focus on Yahweh and the Egyptian pharaoh, Akhenaton's concentration on sun worship. Akhenaton ruled from 1375 to 1358 B.C.E., about a century before the traditional Moses dating.[12]

D. Unique problems surface when dealing with Holy Books because the translators usually are believers. The *New Revised Standard Version* was developed by a committee of about thirty people made up of "scholars affiliated with various Protestant denominations, as well as several Roman Catholic members, an Eastern Orthodox member, and a Jewish member who serves on the Old Testament section."[13] These almost certainly are highly qualified people, but they all believe the Bible is holy.

In one way this is helpful. The translators will be as accurate as possible because they are dealing with material they believe to be divinely inspired. At the same time, they want their work to strengthen the faith of believers and help convert others. They are not objective in the way that we think of scientists as being objective. In the "Preface" to the 1997 Oxford University Press edition of the King James Version, authors Robert Carroll and Stephen Prickett of the University of Glasgow say: "Bibles are, by their very nature, partisan. As that plural suggests, there are many bibles, even in English, and each is the product of a particular interest group--whether religious, commercial, or, increasingly nowadays, both. This edition is no exception" (page v). Examples of this believer bias from the *New Revised Standard Version* illustrate the point.

Translations of the Bible such as the *Revised Standard Version (RSV)* and the *NRSV* substitute "the LORD" for the original Hebrew YHWH (Yahweh), the name of God. Referring to "the LORD" is more acceptable to Christian believers than the name Yahweh.[14] (Scholarly translations of the Bible such as the *RSV* and the *NRSV* do let the informed reader know that the substitution has been made, however.)

A second example from Exodus 20: 5. "You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, punishing children for the iniquity of parents, to the third and fourth generation of those who reject me,..." The word "parents" has been substituted for the Hebrew word meaning "fathers." Changing "fathers" to "parents" gives the impression of gender equality that didn't exist in Israelite society. (One finds the same change in translation in the Exodus 34 and the Deuteronomy Decalogue.)

These efforts to make the wording more acceptable to people today are especially noticeable when one looks at the current, short versions of the Decalogue. Neither mentions slavery or Yahweh's group punishments for disobedience, as we've noted. There are other examples. In Exodus 20, (according to the *Revised Standard Version* that's used in the Catholic Church), people are instructed as follows: "You shall not make for yourself a graven image or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above,

[12] See *The West and The World* by Kevin Reilly, 1980 (NY: Harper & Row, p. 60) among many sources.

[13] "To the Reader" introduction, page xii.

[14] About 200 B.C.E., Jewish leaders began thinking that the name of God was too sacred to say aloud.

or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them or serve them...." This idea is not found in the Catholic short version. And, the Biblical phrase about Yahweh being a "jealous God" is eliminated from both Catholic and Protestant abbreviated renditions. Today, jealousy has only negative connotations. It's not something one attributes to his or her God.[15]

E. Recorded history as we understand it--a factual recitation of actual events occurring in the past--did not exist in the ancient world. Cain Hope Felder of Howard University Divinity School has led "Footsteps of Moses" tours from Egypt to Israel. When talking about origins of the Ten Commandments he selects his words very carefully. He says "all ancient writings have a good share of hyperbole mixed in with mundane details that may anchor an event in reality....Whether or not the Exodus was absolutely the case, it has always been a compelling image."[16] Very well, but how should compelling religious images be treated in class? For many Hindus, Krishna is a 'compelling image." Do we treat it--or that of the Buddha or Native American gods--in the same way? If we do not, do we cross over the line from "teaching about religion" to becoming subtle proselytizers for a particular religious belief?[17]

F. Regarding "Jehovah" as the name of God: The actual vowel sounds for YHWH are not known, but linguistic scholars think there is evidence to support the Yahweh pronunciation. Why, then, is *Jehovah* often heard?

The mistake came in the late Medieval period when translators took note of three vowel signs written beneath YHWH in the old Hebrew texts they were studying. They erroneously assumed the vowel markings--there are no vowel letters in Hebrew--related to YHWH. Thus, they came up with a word that sounded like "YaHoWaH" which was written in Latin and German as "Jehovah." However, errors were involved.

First, the vowel signs the scribes saw beneath YHWH were for "Adonai" the Hebrew word which means "Lord." Beginning about 200 B.C.E. Jews began substituting "Adonai" ("Lord,") for YHWH when reading aloud because YHWH was too holy to pronounce.[18]

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[15] One also can note that the Catholic (and Lutheran to an extent) Decalogue gives emphasis to the protection of women by using Deuteronomy rather than Exodus for Commandments 9 and 10. Exodus verse 16 reads as follows: "You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or male or female slave or ox, or donkey or anything that belongs to your neighbor." Clearly, the neighbor's wife is pictured as belonging to him. She is placed between his house and his farm animals. In Deuteronomy, women are moved ahead and Catholics make that a separate commandment that comes before envy of a person's property. (However, God is still talking only or specifically to men).

[16] Larry Witham, "Proof of Exodus still eludes scholars", *The Washington Times*, August 1st, 1999, p. C1 as secured through the Internet NewsBank NewsFile Collection. Felder is a member of the School of Divinity at Howard University.

[17] Friedman says that "Relatively little of the Torah's story can be verified historically. Sufficient evidence from extrabiblical sources and archaeological artifacts is lacking to make judgments for or against historical veracity." From "Torah (Pentateuch)" in the *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, Vol. VI, p. 620.

[18] Under "Jehovah" in *Microsoft Encarta* (Funk & Wagnall's) computer encyclopedia. Also see "Jehovah" in the *New Westminster Dictionary of the Bible*, pp. 453-54 and in the Preface to the *RSV* of the Bible.

Secondly, the letter "J" has a "dzh" or "dsch" sound in English but not in related languages. In Latin and German, for instance, it sounds like "yuh" or "yah." *Jehovah* in these tongues would be pronounced "Yahova." However, when English speakers see a "J," they put their tongue to the roof of their mouth and make the "dzh" sound. (There is one English word in which "J" has a "Y" sound--"Hallelujah" which means "Praise ye Yah.")

G. We've followed the practice of many scholars who now use B.C.E.(Before the Common Era) and C.E. (Common Era) as opposed to B.C. and A.D. dating. There are two reasons for this change:

First, B.C. (Before Christ) and A.D. (*anno Domini*--in the year of the Lord) are offensive to many non-Christians. Teachers' Press materials are available through the World Wide Web.

Secondly, B.C. and A.D. are not accurate links to the birth of Jesus. Using the data found in the Christian's New Testament, historic sources and the peculiarities of our calendar, the dates are off by several years. (See *Calendars and Thinking Logically* available from The Teachers' Press.)

H. By 500 B.C.E. great changes were taking place in Middle Eastern concepts of the soul. Before the Captivity Period, Hebrews tended to see the realm of the dead--Sheol--as a shadowy place where one is separated from YHWH. These underworld concepts were similar to the beliefs of other peoples in the area.[19] As a consequence, all of the versions of the Decalogue limit YHWH to earthly punishments for sin. Group punishment is included.[20]

Then--along with the development of monotheism--the idea arose that a cosmic God could award or punish an individual after death. The Divine consequences of what one did no longer had to be earth-bound! This intellectual revolution is apparent when one looks at how sin is dealt with in the Decalogue as compared to what Jesus describes. Many scholars see the influence of Persian Zoroastrianism in this shift.

One can find an extended scholarly discussion of Zoroastrianism in the *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, Vol. VI, pages 1168-1174. The Appendix to this lesson has a shorter, more popularized statement.

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19 The Greek concept of Hades provides an example.

20 Group punishment beliefs continue. If one person in a family or some other group commits an evil act, there are people who think it's fair to strike back at any of its members. War-like confrontations provide multiple examples. So do forms of prejudice, street gang retaliations and the like. Furthermore, there are religious people who think that whole societies--America, for instance--will be punished by God for the evil acts committed by leaders or other specific individuals.

Activities for Teachers and Students

1. Religious students can be encouraged to interview their religious leaders to learn about their group's understanding of the Decalogue.
   a. Jewish or Christian students can ask such questions as these: What Bible translation do members of our religion most commonly use? How do we interpret the 34th chapter of Exodus? What is our most commonly used version of the Decalogue? Does our group think that it should be placed in public buildings?
   b. Students from other traditions can ask what guidelines in their faith compare most closely to the popularized short versions of the Decalogue.

2. Do governmental buildings (including schools) in the community display abbreviated versions of (somebody's listing) of the Ten Commandments? If so, what Biblical translation is being used? Is the editing closer to a Catholic or Protestant formulation?

3. Students can read the Supreme Court decisions which have ruled that it is a violation of American Constitutional principles for a public school to post the Bible-based Ten Commandments. In discussion and papers have them list reasons the Justices gave for their decisions.

4. Individually or in groups, members of one's class can investigate other ancient or modern codes of conduct. They can analyze Hammurabi's code, Confucian ideals, the Scouting "Code of Conduct" or principles of a "12-Step Program" designed to deal with a personal addiction such as alcoholism.

5. Young people can think through their own list of "Rules for Successful Living" As one example, they could begin with the ten categories of moral development outlined by William Bennett in The *Book of Virtues*: *A Treasury of Great Moral Stories*. (1993. NY: Simon & Schuster.) Bennett's ten chapters have these titles: "Self-Discipline," "Compassion," "Responsibility," "Friendship," "Work," "Courage," "Perseverance," "Honesty," "Loyalty," and "Faith."

6. Have students clip (or reproduce) articles from newspapers and magazines relating to the Ten Commandments. Or, they can use their computer skills to search the World Wide Web for viewpoints relating to governmental displays of the the Decalogue. Use these materials and sources as a basis for class discussion in light of the information found in this lesson.

Appendix: The Religion of Zoroaster

Zoroaster is the Greek name for Zarathushtra, probably an independent-thinking Aryan priest living in Iran during the 600s B.C.E. Zoroastrianism became the Persian state religion, and its influence expanded with Persian power beginning in the 500s B.C.E. This summary is from *Freethought Across the Centuries* by Gerald A. Larue, 1996, Amherst NY: Humanist Press, pp. 75-76. A more detailed account by Mary Boyce is in the *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, Vol. VI, pages 1168-1174.

> Zoroastrian religion...postulated the idea of a single god of goodness and truth. According to Zoroaster, Ahura Mazda was the all-knowing creator and sustainer of the world of good. From this god emerged all the good and positive factors of the universe including light and wisdom and truth. Then, how could one account for evil? The answer introduced the concept of cosmic dualism. Evil came from the "Hostile Spirit," Angra Mainyu (also called Ahriman), the epitome of evil who was the opposing spirit and the symbol of darkness and the lie. These two counterforces became personified and their attributes became personalities or opposing angelic and demonic identities who were part of heavenly versus satanic hierarchies. Surrounding Ahura Mazda were Good Thought, Correct Action, Wisdom, Piety, Salvation and Immortality. Ahriman's forces included Evil Thought or Deceit, Pride, Disease, Irreverence and Desecration....
>
> Each individual was free to choose which side he or she would support. Every act, every thought testified either to allegiance to Ahura Mazda or to Ahriman. Zoroastrian myth called humans to a life of rigid discipline in support of the good, the truth and the proper, despite the ever present pressure from the cohorts of Ahriman that tempted them to betray the commitment
>
> What was the reward for good behavior? What advantage was there if one followed the way of Ahura Mazda but suffered nothing but misfortune? The answer lay in the future and in the afterlife. Within the cosmic bipolarity, Zoroaster envisioned history moving toward an ultimate goal. As time moved through its various periods--from the age of gold, to the age of silver, then to bronze and iron--it approached closer and closer to end time. Ultimately there would be a final conflict in which the powers of good and truth and light would overcome the forces of evil, the lie and darkness. Then (according to later Zoroastrian mythology) in the [end times], a savior would come to renew all existence, produce a new cosmos, resurrect the dead and unite body and soul.
>
> Meanwhile, at death, each human soul approached a bridge called *Civat* or "The Bridge of the Separator" over which the righteous could pass to paradise. The wicked, the foolish followers of the lie, would be turned back for punishment. They would go to the house of the lie, the place of evil thought, to dwell throughout the ages in darkness, misery. Finally, at the end of time, following the final conflict all would be resurrected, judged and tested by passing through a flood of molten metal. For the followers of Ahura Mazda the passages would be as going through a warm bath. They would then enter the realm of of the righteous, the house of song , the dwelling place of good thought where they would behold the divine throne of Ahura Mazda. As for the wicked, they would be utterly destroyed (although some texts suggest that, after terrible suffering that would purge them of evil, they too would be admitted to paradise.)

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Teaching about Religion: The Golden Rule

By Fred Smith & Brant Abrahamson

Introduction

The precise, capitalized English language phrase *The Golden Rule* was not used until the last few centuries.[1] However, variations of the idea are an ancient basis for moral or ethical conduct by peoples around the world. The Golden Rule's universality should not surprise us since it warns against selfishness, a common human trait.

Some examples of how *The Golden Rule* is expressed in religious holy books follow. Please be aware of two things while studying them.

1. Warnings against selfishness are not limited to world religions. The first reference is to Confucianism, often considered a secular philosophy. *The Golden Rule* phrasing most familiar to people in the United States—"Do unto others as you would have them do unto you"—comes from American folk wisdom. It is not found in standard translations of any holy book.

2. These ancient expressions of unselfishness did not mean to their authors what they likely mean to us today. The idea of a single moral standard for people anywhere on earth is a fairly recent development. Individual human equality—treating people in similar ways regardless of gender, religion, age, social status, nationality, and ethnic background—was not a part of ancient ways of understanding. People's identifications and loyalties were more narrowly drawn, often limited to their own tribe.[2]

—Fred Smith and Brant Abrahamson are high school teachers in Brookfield, Illinois. This material is drawn from their book Thinking about Religion from a Global Perspective *(Brookfield, IL: The Teachers' Press, 3731 Madison Ave., Brookfield, IL 60513; phone 708/485-5983; fax 708/387-7057; e-mail teachersp@aol.com; http://www/angelfire.com/biz/tchpr).*

Golden Rule Examples from Enduring Ethical/Religious Systems

Confucianism: Tzu Kung asked: "Is there any one word that can serve as a principle for conduct of life?" Confucius said: "perhaps...'reciprocity': Do not do to others what you would not want others to do to you."

The Analects, *Great Religions of the World*, (National Geographic, 1971, p. 167).

Judaism: "You shall not take revenge or bear a grudge against your kinsfolk. You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

Leviticus, 19:18. From *The Torah* (Philadelphia, PA: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1962, p. 217).

Hinduism: "This is the sum of duty: do naught to others which if done to thee, would cause thee pain."

Mahabharata, 5, 1517, *Readings From World Religions* compiled by Selwyn Gurney Champion and Dorothy Short (Boston, MA: The Beacon Press, 1951, p. 15). This is one of many similar verses from Hindu literature that are found in *Readings From World Religions*.

Buddhism: "Hurt not others with that which pains yourself."

Udanavarga 5, 18, *Readings From World Religions*, p. 17

"'Practice the truth that thy brother is the same as thou,' said Buddha."

World Faith by Ruth Cranston (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1949, p. 40.)

Zoroastrianism: "That nature only is good when it shall not do unto another whatever is not good for its own self."

Dadistan-i dinik, from *Readings From World Religions*, p. 87.

"Do not unto others all that which is not well for oneself."

Shayat-na-shayast, from *Readings From World Religions*, p. 87.

Christianity: "In everything do to others as you would have them do to you; for this is the law and the prophets."

Matthew, 7:12 from the New Testament of the *Holy Bible; New Revised Standard Version* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989, p. 7).

Jainism: "A man should wander about treating all creatures as he himself would be treated."

Sutrakritanga, from *Readings From World Religions*, p. 151.

Sikhism: "Treat others as thou wouldst be treated thyself."

Angad M. 2, 29, from *Readings From World Religions*, p. 299.

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Questions and Projects

Questions

1. How else have you heard *The Golden Rule* (anti-selfishness) idea expressed?
2. Which *Golden Rule* variations from ancient times most clearly relate to relations within one group—as opposed to having universal application?
3. Who does Tzu Kung likely mean by "others"? Who would "others" have meant to an early Hindu? A Buddhist? An Israelite? A follower of Jesus or Muhammad?
4. Would women or children likely have been included in ancient statements? What about members of "enemy" groups?
5. Is *The Golden Rule* always a wise course of action? What exceptions, if any, can you think of?
6. What happens in a society if people generally fail to follow *The Golden Rule*? Must order then be imposed through more and stricter laws? Harsher punishments?
7. How can one explain anti-*Golden Rule* sayings? Consider these: "Do others or they will do you" (American Proverb, cited by Dickens before 1844). "Do unto others as they would do unto you if they had the chance" (unidentified American author). "Do unto the other feller the way he'd like to do unto you, an' do it fust" (E. N. Westcott in *David Harum*).[3]

Projects

1. Secure *The Rise of Silas Lapham* and determine how *The Golden Rule* relates to the overall theme of the book (which revolves around a paint manufacturer). How, specifically, is Rogers trying to manipulate Silas Lapham?
2. What quotes by secular leaders can you find that argue against human selfishness? Why are highly nationalistic sayings—such as "My country right or wrong!" —not in this category?
3. How does Amitai Etzioni use the term in his book, *The New Golden Rule* (New York: Basic Books, 1996, pp. 12-13).
4. If you are religious and your faith—such as Islam—isn't represented, secure a similar statement from within your belief system. Interviewing one of your religious leaders is a good way to begin. If your faith is listed, compare holy book translations of *The Golden Rule* idea. For instance, how is Leviticus, 19:18 worded in other Bible translations? How is Matthew 7:12 phrased?

Notes

1. The English word *golden* has long been used to signify high value or quality.

   However, *The Golden Rule* (capitalized) appears only within the last 120 years. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary (OED)* (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, Second Edition, 1989, Vol. 6, page 656), there is no record of golden being used to refer to desired ways of behaving until the late 1600s. Then, in 1674, Godfrey wrote that "Whilst forgetting that *Golden Law*, do as you would be done by, they make self the center of their actions." In 1741 [Isaac] Watts spoke of "that *golden principle* of morality which the blessed Lord has given us."

   According to the *OED*, the first literary reference is in *The Rise of Silas Lapham* written by William Dean Howells in the 1880s. Howells was a leading American writer of the late 19th and early 20th Centuries. *The Rise of Silas Lapham* was one of his major works and continues to be published. The "Golden Rule" appears in the book only once, and it is used as a shaming devise. Rogers, a business associate of Silas Lapham, attempts to persuade Lapham to do what Rogers wants him to do by saying:

   > Well, then, I want you to give me this chance to get on my feet again. You've no right to deprive me of it; it's unchristian. In our dealings with each other we should be guided by the Golden Rule, as I was saying to Mrs. Lapham before you came in. I told her that if I knew myself, I should in your place consider the circumstances of a man in mine,... (Harpers' Modern Classics series, 1958. New York: Harper & Brothers, p. 342.)

2. The "equality-for-everyone-as-an-individual" idea originated in the Western world, and it's not necessarily acceptable elsewhere. In the West—that includes the United States—various people who focus on group life and group equality also question the utility of such strong emphasis on individual equality.
3. See *A New Dictionary of Quotations* selected and edited by H. L. Mencken (New York: Knopf, 1942), pp. 471-72. Mencken has chronologically listed a number of such quotations and sources. Also see *The Home Book of Quotations* compiled by Burton Stevenson (New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1956).

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